



North Dakota House of Representatives

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Committees:
Agriculture
Judiciary

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Chairman Weis and House Human Services Committee,

My name is Ruth Buffalo and I represent District 27 in south Fargo. HB 1488 will provide a comprehensive approach to address the root causes of symptoms many communities across North Dakota continue to face today. Native Americans have an overwhelming amount of health disparities such as premature death, high rates of addiction, cancer, diabetes, heart disease, incarceration, and suicide.

This bill will provide a mechanism for communities to share their story in a brave space in the hope of contributing to solutions for future generations. Partnerships with culturally relevant trauma informed practitioners and local tribal colleges will ensure a local support system to assist communities as they navigate through the Truth, Healing and Reconciliation process. The recording of community members stories will be digitally archived and protected in partnership with local tribal colleges.

According to the Truth Seeking: Elements of Creating an Effecting Truth Commission report, Why Does the Truth Matter?

"Establishing the truth about what happened and who is responsible for serious crimes helps communities to understand the causes of past abuse and end it. Without accurate knowledge of past violations, it is difficult for a society to prevent them from happening again. The truth can assist in the healing process after traumatic events; restore personal dignity, often after years of stigmatization; and safeguard against impunity and public denial. Establishing truth can initiate a process of reconciliation, as denial and silence can increase mistrust and social polarization. A political order based on transparency and accountability is more likely to enjoy the trust and confidence of residents and citizens." (2013 Amnesty Commission of the Ministry of Justice of Brazil)

"A Truth and Reconciliation Commission shall be established to address impunity, break the cycle of violence, provide a forum for both the victims and perpetrators of human rights violations to tell their story, get a clear picture of the past in order to facilitate genuine healing and reconciliation." Peace Agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front, Article VI (2), 1999

This bill will foster truth, healing and reconciliation for past, present and future generations. Please give HB 1488 a do pass recommendation.

I will stand for any questions.